

## STATE PERSONNEL ANALYST I (10841)



### HOW TO PREPARE BOOKLET

## **Introduction**

A written examination is being given for the State Personnel Analyst I job classification. The purpose of this booklet is to help you prepare for the written exam. Since all the material you will need at the time of the exam will be provided when you take the exam, you will not be allowed to bring this booklet to the exam with you.

## **Job Preview**

All State Personnel Analyst I positions are located in Montgomery at the State Personnel Department.

The State Personnel Analyst I job involves moderately difficult professional work in public personnel administration. Employees in this class perform professional work in examination administration and test development and/or classification and compensation. Employees are expected to gain experience in the professional aspects of public personnel administration and as they progress are expected to handle responsible personnel assignments in an independent manner. Work may involve delegating work assignments to office support personnel. Work is subject to technical review by a professional superior at specified points during its progress and is subject to established timelines and standards for completion. Employees assist in the development of written exams and other complex selection devices through test validation studies; work with and interview incumbents and subject matter experts to obtain, edit and analyze knowledge, skill, and ability statements; assist in the preparation of examinations and write reports documenting procedures followed according to the "Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection;" assist in test related research projects to investigate more effective selection procedures; establish eligible registers; discuss with applicants their work experience and training; explain scores and ranks. Under technical review, conduct position audits and incumbent interviews to determine proper allocation of jobs to classifications; recommend reallocations; develop and complete salary surveys in order to solicit or provide salary data; prepare and revise class specifications; advise and counsel agencies, employees and the general public requesting information or guidance on personnel matters.

## **How the Written Exam was Developed**

A study of the State Personnel Analyst I classification was conducted prior to developing the examination. A number of employees who work in this position and their supervisors participated in this study. When the information was completed, the results showed that a new employee in the position of State Personnel Analyst I must be able to perform several important duties. These activities are listed below.

- Reviews background information.
- Reviews written inquiries and requests
- Discusses issues with supervisor, co-workers, clerical staff, etc.
- Composes letters, memos, and other documents
- Reviews applications for minimum qualifications.
- Schedules applicants for orientation, if offered.
- Schedules applicants for examination
- Researches information such as position history, class history, and GHRS data
- Reviews reference materials such as laws, court orders, correspondence, and State Personnel Board Rules
- Composes letters, memos, reports, and class specifications
- Calculates data such as percentages, means, medians, and modes
- Interviews job incumbents, supervisors, and other departmental staff to include researching job duties and organizational structure
- Calculates data such as length of service and performance appraisal averages

The study also showed that the following knowledges and abilities are associated with the above activities. These knowledges and abilities are needed on the first day of work before training:

### **Abilities**

- *Ability to read and comprehend materials such as court orders, laws, technical materials, letters, memos, and forms.*
- *Ability to plan and organize work assignments as needed to determine priorities, set and meet deadlines, make decisions, and complete work assignments in a timely manner.*
- *Ability to analyze a problem as needed to develop logical solutions.*
- *Ability to apply professional standards, laws, regulations and guidelines.*
- *Ability to arrive at sound judgments after analysis and evaluation of data.*
- Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with superiors, associates, and departmental officials.
- Ability to communicate orally with individuals of various levels of education and socio-economic background.
- Ability to communicate clearly and concisely in writing.

## Knowledges

- *Knowledge of math to include addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, percentages, and ratios of whole numbers and decimals.*
- *Knowledge of statistics to include basic measures of central tendency and their computation.*
- Knowledge of interviewing techniques such as structure of interviews and types of questions.
- Knowledge of English to include grammar and composition.
- Knowledge of personnel management to include compensation methods, performance appraisal techniques, employee selection and placement, and employment laws as needed to exchange and gather information, interpret data, and provide recommendations.

The examination for State Personnel Analyst I will measure the knowledges and abilities above that appear in *italic print*. The remaining knowledges and abilities must be demonstrated during the probationary period if you are hired into the State Personnel Analyst I position.

## Examination Administration Information

Here are some suggestions for what to do before the examination and for getting to the exam location on the correct day, on time, and with the proper materials that you will need to take the examination.

- Get there early. **Give yourself plenty of extra time to get to the test center and to park. If you are rushed and late, you will be upset when you get there. Plan to get there before the scheduled exam time.**
- Do not bring this booklet or any study materials with you to the exam location. **This includes notes and any manuals and source documents that you may have used to prepare for the examination. All test materials needed for the examination will be provided.**
- You must bring the test-scheduling card or letter **that you received from the State of Alabama Personnel Department. This card/letter lists the examination title, location of exam, and date, day, and time of examination.**
- You must bring two sharpened #2 lead pencils.
- You must also bring picture identification to the exam location. **This may be your driver's license, a military identification card, or a passport.**
- You may bring a calculator **to use for the State Personnel Analyst I examination.** Small solar powered or battery operated calculators that perform basic functions such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, square roots, or percentages are allowed. **Calculators that plug-in, utilize tape, have word processing, spelling, thesauruses, or other storage and retrieval capabilities (except basic memory functions), are not allowed. Calculators that are a feature on a cell phone are not permitted. Calculators are subject to inspection by exam monitors. Applicants may not borrow or share calculators at the exam site.**

- You will **not be allowed** to enter the examination location or take the examination without your test-scheduling card/letter and picture identification.

### **How to Prepare Using This Guide**

This Pretest booklet can be used as a practice guide. The questions contained in the booklet are a representation of the questions that will be on the actual examination. Familiarize yourself with the sample questions that begin on page 8. You would be well-advised to read the instructions and answer each question carefully. Like the examination questions (all of which are multiple choice), the sample items are presented in the following categories:

The sample items which follow are representative of each type of item that will appear on the written exam. They are not necessarily based on the same information, diagrams, etc, as the actual examination. All questions will be multiple choice.

In addition, please review the General Instructions to Candidates Taking Written Examinations provided at the test site on the day of the examination.

### **Taking the Examination**

You will be given 3 hours to complete the exam. Use your time efficiently. The exam is not a test of how quickly you can answer questions. However, it does not allow you the time you might like to have. In the parts of the test that require reading, try to keep a steady pace. Try to finish as much of the test as you can.

While reading passages, you may want to take a few notes. Make your notes brief. You may also want to underline or highlight important information as you read.

Don't give up. Many people give up too easily on tests. If the question or problem seems hard, they do not even try. Mark an answer on your answer sheet even if it is a guess. You will not be penalized for guessing. On the other hand, do not spend too much time on any one question just because it is hard. This may not leave you enough time to answer questions that you know.

### **Reasonable Accommodations**

If you would like to request special testing accommodation or have any questions concerning the test site or testing conditions, please contact the State Personnel Department at (334) 242-3389.

## **Test Results**

Four to six weeks after completing the exam, you will receive a Notice of Examination Results postcard in the mail. This postcard will identify your score, or Band placement, for the written exam. If you have not received your score within four to six weeks, you should call the State Personnel Department.

In addition to your Band placement, you may also obtain your standing, or rank on the register, online at [www.personnel.alabama.gov](http://www.personnel.alabama.gov). From the home page, you should click on “Applicants” and then “Register Standings”, and follow the instructions. For security purposes, you must now create an online profile in order to access your standing.

## **Rescheduling a Written Exam**

If there is a conflict in your schedule, and you are unable to attend the written exam at the time and date for which you have been scheduled, you must resubmit your Application for Examination. The State Personnel Department will schedule you for the next available administration of this written exam.

# Test Taking Tips

- **Listen** to the test monitors and follow their instructions carefully.
- If you are not sure of an answer, **go with your first choice**.
- Work through the test **without spending too much time on any one item**.
- If you cannot decide on the best answer to a question, **skip it and go back to it later**.
- Use your watch or the clock in the room to **keep track of your time** during the test.
- It's to your advantage to **answer as many questions as possible**, even if you must guess.
- **Mark your answers on the answer sheet and NOT in the test booklet**. Only answers clearly marked on the answer sheet can be given credit.
- If at **any time before or during the exam**, you have a question, **ask the monitor for assistance**.

## Sample Test Questions

### READING COMPREHENSION

The position of State Personnel Analyst I requires reading documents such as memos, manuals, Personnel rules, court orders, technical reports, and other written materials. In this section, your ability to read and comprehend this kind of material will be measured.

#### EXAMPLE:

Standard formats promote efficiency and reduce the chance of error. Time is saved in training personnel because it takes less time to teach one letter and one memorandum style than it does teaching several. Since the word processing operator does not have to make decisions regarding personal preferences of authors, the possibility of using the incorrect style choice is eliminated.

According to the above passage, using standard formats for documents:

- (A) increases decision making.
- (B) adds to the clarity.
- (C) reduces the chance of error.
- (D) all of the above.

The correct answer is "C". According to the first line of the passage, the use of standard formats promotes efficiency and reduces the chance of an error.



## **MATH**

The job of a State Personnel Analyst I requires the ability to perform mathematical computations such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, percentages, ratios, and decimals. In this section your ability to calculate numerical values will be measured.

You will be given several sets of numerical data. These data sets will be presented as a table of numbers, a mathematical formula, or in narrative form. Use the information provided to answer the questions that follow each set of data.

### **EXAMPLE:**

200 applicants have applied for a job. 112 of these applicants are female and the rest are male. 37 female applicants and 28 male applicants met the minimum qualifications.

What percentage of female applicants were qualified?

- (A) 14%
- (B) 18%
- (C) 25%
- (D) 33%

The correct answer is "D". According to the information provided there were 112 total female applicants, 37 of which were qualified. 37 is 33% of 112.

## STATISTICS

The job of a State Personnel Analyst I requires the ability to calculate and interpret statistics to include basic measures of central tendency. In this section your ability to compute and interpret statistics will be measured.

You will be given several sets of numerical data. These data sets will be presented as a table of numbers, a mathematical formula, or in narrative form. Use the information provided to answer the questions that follow each set of data.

### EXAMPLE:

Banding is a statistical procedure used in scoring examinations. Banding treats scores within a statistically defined range as essentially equal. This statistically defined range is called a **bandwidth**. Assume that the bandwidth is equal to two Standard Errors of Measurement (SEMs) as defined below:

$$\text{Bandwidth} = 2 \text{ SEMs} = 2[\text{SD}_x \sqrt{(1-r_{xx})}]$$

**SD<sub>x</sub>** is the standard deviation of the scores

**r<sub>xx</sub>** is the reliability estimate

In common terms this formula reads: Bandwidth equals two SEMs which equals two times the standard deviation times the square root of one minus the reliability estimate.

Band 1 is calculated by subtracting the bandwidth (two SEMs) from the highest score within a data set. This difference sets the lowest possible score that can be achieved and be considered in Band 1. Each successive band is calculated by subtracting the bandwidth value from the lowest possible score in the preceding band.

What is the bandwidth for an examination, if the standard deviation is 3.2, the reliability estimate is .95, and the highest score is 100? Round your answer to the nearest hundredth.

- (A) .72
- (B) 1.43
- (C) 3.2
- (D) 98.57

The correct answer is "B". The square root of .05 multiplied by 3.2 is .7155. That number is then multiplied by 2 to obtain 1.431.

## PLANNING AND ORGANIZING

The position of State Personnel Analyst I requires planning and organizing work assignments for oneself and for others in order to meet deadlines and take corrective action. This section measures your ability to plan and organize.

Given a situation to plan and organize, you will be asked to respond as a State Personnel Analyst I should respond.

Read the situation. Then, read each item. Base your responses on the situation only. Do not base your responses on previous experience. Select the MOST APPROPRIATE choice.

### EXAMPLE:

**Situation 1:** Your supervisor will be out of the office today. You arrived at work at 7:55 A.M. You and your spouse have an appointment today at 11:00 A.M. with your family doctor who has advised you that the appointment should not be rescheduled. You need to leave by 10:30 A.M. and will be unable to return to the office later today. Sue Beck, a clerical aide and office receptionist, is the only other employee in the office today. However, she does not type. Your supervisor left a note listing the following tasks that must be completed today:

1. Type the Zicker report (2 hours to complete).
2. Sort and distribute the mail (30 minutes to complete).
3. Call Virginia Hall about the Zicker project (10 minutes to complete).
4. Post the new dividend rates by 12 noon, today (20 minutes to complete).
5. Set up the conference room for the next day's 8:00 A.M. meeting (30 minutes to complete).
6. File dividend reports (2 hours to complete).

**Item:** Which of the following tasks below would you be forced to perform yourself?

- (A) file dividend reports
- (B) set up the conference room
- (C) type the Zicker report
- (D) sort and distribute the day's mail

The correct answer is "C." Since Ms. Beck cannot type, typing the Zicker report must be done by YOU. Ms. Beck possesses the experience needed to complete A, B, and D.

## PROBLEM ANALYSIS

The position of State Personnel Analyst I requires interpreting and analyzing information, including statistics, to determine compliance with standards and to assist in planning or corrective actions. This section measures your ability to interpret and analyze statistical information.

After reading the following items, select the MOST APPROPRIATE response, basing your decisions on the information provided, not on previous experience.

### EXAMPLE:

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Washing clothes	30 minutes	\$.50 per minute
Ironing clothes	20 minutes	\$.75 per minute
Vacuuming	25 minutes	\$1.00 per minute
Washing dishes	15 minutes	\$.50 per minute

According to the information above, which of the following activities takes the greatest amount of time to complete?

- (A) washing clothes
- (B) ironing clothes
- (C) vacuuming
- (D) washing dishes

The most appropriate response is "A". If you review the information and look at the column labeled 'Time,' you will see that 30 minutes, the greatest time, corresponds to washing clothes.

## INTERPRETATION OF STANDARDS AND POLICIES

The position of State Personnel Analyst I requires interpreting standards and policies for clients, employers, and other staff members. In this section, your ability to interpret standards and policies will be measured.

Review the minimum qualifications and the three resumes provided below.

Read each test item. Base your responses on the information in the resumes only. Do not base your responses on previous experience.

### EXAMPLE:

#### Resume' 1

Donna J. Simmons  
2112 Maple Street  
Montgomery, AL 36106  
DOB 11/03/77  
Jon's Bar and Grill  
2 years experience as  
a food server  
high School diploma

#### Resume' 2

Steven K. Hatley  
74 West Chambers Rd  
Wetumpka, AL 36006  
DOB 3/26/77  
Graham's Steakhouse  
8 months experience  
washing dishes/setup  
2 years college

#### Resume' 3

Richelle F. Rourke  
634 First Street  
Millbrook, AL 36210  
DOB 8/22/77  
Beverly's Bistro  
7 months as a  
hostess/food server  
1 year technical  
school

A local tavern places an ad for a new bar tender. The minimum qualifications for the job include High School or GED equivalency and 1 year of work experience serving food in a restaurant setting.

Which of the above applicants meets the minimum qualifications for the bar tender job?

- (A) Donna J. Simmons
- (B) Steven K. Hatley
- (C) Richelle F. Rourke
- (D) None of the above

The correct answer is "A". Each of the three has at least a high school diploma. Hatley and Rourke have experience in restaurant food service, but not the required year. Therefore, the only applicant who meets all three criteria is Donna J. Simmons

## MAKING SOUND JUDGMENTS

The position of State Personnel Analyst I requires reviewing job analysis data and position classification information in making decisions. In this section, your ability to arrive at sound judgments will be measured.

### EXAMPLE:

Example Table					
	Mean Imp	N At Entry		Mean Imp	N at Entry
K01	3.61	0.63	K06	3.01	1.00
K02	0.92	1.00	K07	1.17	1.00
K03	1.85	0.91	K08	1.73	0.33
K04	2.12	0.75	K09	2.72	0.50
K05	4.00	0.93	K10	0.50	0.00

### KEY:

**K = Knowledge**

**Mean Imp = Mean importance rating**

**N at Entry = Needed at entry**

A task or KSA (knowledge, skill and ability) is considered “qualifying” if it meets the following criteria:

The mean Importance Rating is 3.00 or greater

The mean Needed at Entry Rating is .66 or greater

Which of the following statements are true?

- (A) K01, K03, K06, and K08 all qualify.
- (B) K04, K05, K08, K09 all qualify.
- (C) Both A and B are true.
- (D) Neither A nor B are true.

The correct answer is “D”. In option (A), K01 meets the Mean Importance Rating criteria but not the Needed at Entry criteria, K03 meets the Needed at Entry criteria but not the Mean Importance Rating criteria, and K08 meets neither criteria. In option (B), K08 and K09 meet neither criteria. Therefore, neither option (A) nor option (B) contains KSAs which all qualify.

## **Banded Scoring**

When the written exam for State Personnel Analyst I is graded, the scores will be grouped into bands. When you receive notification of how you performed on the exam, you will not be given a numerical score (i.e., 67 out of 80, 93 out of 100). Rather, you will be informed into which band (i.e., 1, 3, 6, 10) your score fell. The following information is provided to help you understand the banding procedure.

### ***What is banding?***

Banding is one way to reduce the impact of fluctuations in test scores that do not provide meaningful information about differences in the ability to perform the job. One important purpose of testing is to identify the differences in test scores that reflect real differences among candidates. Banded scoring is a statistical procedure for grouping raw test scores that statistically are not meaningfully different from one another. In banded scoring, bands are set objectively and statistically. They are not manipulated arbitrarily.

### ***Misconceptions about banding.***

There are many misconceptions about banding and the use of banded scores. Some of the most common misconceptions are listed below. Each misconception is followed by a clarification.

#### ***Misconception: Each band should have the same number of people.***

We do not force bands to be a certain size. The people in a band are similar to each other in that statistically there is no meaningful difference in their scores. Sometimes Band 1 may be very large, and at other times it may be small. People's scores determine the size of the bands. We never know how many people will be in each band until we receive the test scores.

#### ***Misconception: Band numbers have no meaning. I don't have a score.***

Band numbers do have meaning. Think of a band as a group of tied scores. Consider that in school two students with average grades of 94.5 and 94.3 would both be grouped into the same band. Just because one student made a 94.5 and one student made a 94.3, the teacher cannot be sure that 0.2 of a point means that the student who scored 94.5 is smarter or is a better student. The scores are so close to each other that they are basically the same.

For example, think of the achievement tests that children take in school. The fine print on these tests always informs you not to focus on the numerical score but rather on the comparative score, which uses some type of grouping technique such as percentiles, stanines, standard deviations, grade levels, etc. These grouping techniques are considered forms of banding. Banding compares your performance on the test to the other test takers' performance and groups your score with others that are statistically the same.

***Misconception: Band numbers are the same as letter grades.***

Band numbers are not the same as letter grades. Band 1 does not equate to an “A,” Band 2 to a “B,” and so on. In school, a predetermined numerical range of scores (i.e., 90-100, 80-90, 70-80) equals an alphabetical value (i.e., A, B, C). This grading system is a form of banding. In this case, unlike grade school, the width of bands is not set in advance. Scores are banded only in relation to one another, so you compete against other test takers. The scores of all test takers determine the width of the bands, and your score is set in relation to the scores of your peers.

***Misconception: A banded score on one test has the same value as a banded score on another test.***

Banded scores are test specific and cannot be compared from test to test. Consider that a test taker scored 88 on one test, and the highest score of all test takers was 89. It is likely for this exam that the test taker who scored 88 would be in Band 1. However, if the same person scored the same grade on another test, and the highest score of all test takers was 100, he/she may be in Band 2 or Band 3. Candidates’ scores vary on each test, and since candidate scores determine the width of bands and into which band test takers fall, the value of a banded score varies from test to test.

***Misconception: People with the most seniority who have been on the job longest should be in the top bands.***

People with the most experience do not always fall into the top bands. Time spent in a job may not be the same as possessing a knowledge, skill, or ability needed to perform the job. The people with the strongest knowledges, skills, and abilities (or who did best on the exam) will be in the top bands. Some of the people in the top bands will have been in similar jobs for a long period of time, and others will have been in similar jobs for a short period of time. Years of service do not always equal proficiency. Candidates with seniority or experience do not automatically perform best on the test. Regardless of seniority, candidates who display the appropriate knowledges, skills, and abilities perform best on the test.

***Misconception: A standing in Band 4 or below automatically indicates failure or ineligibility for jobs.***

A band number of 4 or lower is not automatically equated with failure. For one test, there may only be 4 bands, and for another test, there may be 14 bands. So, your success on the test based on your position in a band varies from test to test. Your standing in a band does not indicate whether or not you pass or fail the test. The true test of success in your employment opportunities is whether or not you can be certified and considered for a job vacancy.

***Misconception: Banding replaced the “Rule of 10.”***

Banding did not replace the “Rule of 10.” The “Rule of 10” determines the number of bands to be certified. In the past, tied scores referred to an actual numerical score (e.g., two candidates with a score of 98.98 were considered tied) while now all of the scores within a band are considered tied.



***Misconception: People in a band do not differ.***

When several people are placed in the same band, it does not mean that those people do not differ at all. Instead, it means that their scores on the exam do not differ enough to be separate scores.